

Konig-Speicher Farm (Berger Farm)  
N side of Church Road S of Tulpehocken Creek  
Mount Pleasant vicinity  
North Heidelberg Twp.  
Berks County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-258

HABS  
PA

MTYPE 1,

13-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Reduced copy of measured drawing

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. PA-258

## KONIG-SPEICHER FARM (Berger Farm)

Location:

North side of Church Road (LR06048), just south of Tulpehocken Creek, .3 mile southwest of State Route 183 (Bernville Road), approximately .6 mile west of Mount Pleasant, North Heidelberg Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

USGS Bernville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: House 18.408580.4472915  
Log House 18.408575.4472915  
Smokehouse 18.408560.4472900

Log house dismantled and rebuilt in 1976 as one-story house by Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Culture Society, relocated adjacent to their headquarters on Willow Street, Lenhartsville Borough, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner:

United States Government Farm demolished except for log house; see above.

Present Use:

Demolished for Blue Marsh Lake project, sponsored by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Significance:

In this example of a Pennsylvania German family farm, the ensemble of farm buildings (termed die Bauerei) is compactly sited and takes advantage of the rolling contour of the land in an aesthetically pleasing and functionally convenient way. The two-and-a-half-story log house, which could date from the mid eighteenth century, has a spring running through the basement. The nearby farmhouse might have resembled the log house at one time; it was doubled in size by a frame addition, probably in the mid nineteenth century. The outdoor bake oven and octagonal smokehouse are rare outbuildings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The exact dates of construction of the farm buildings have not been determined. Unfortunately, demolition occurred while data was being gathered, compounding a difficult situation.

Locally, The log house is believed to have been the original house on the property, erected in the mid eighteenth century. Mrs. Walter Berger, a recent owner, agreed with this assessment. William R. Ross, an appraiser, believed that it was built in the mid or late eighteenth century, and that it was raised and altered between 1815 and 1820. Tom Jones, a restoration consultant, believed that the large house predated the log house, and that the latter dated from circa 1825. George Meiser, a local historian, also dated it circa 1820.

Estimates of the large house's construction date are similarly confusing. Generally, it was felt that the date stone "1856" referred to an addition or alterations. The house appears to have been built in two sections. The older section may date from circa 1825 and the addition from 1856. There is some doubt as to the materials of construction, which may have been half log and half frame, or all frame. The structure was not available for inspection by HABS personnel.

The frame barn, like most of the outbuildings, dated from circa 1850. The outdoor bake oven probably dated from circa 1825, but many have been rebuilt from earlier bake ovens. The octagonal smokehouse, an unusual structure, was built circa 1860.

2. Architect: As in the case of nearly all Pennsylvania German farms, there was no architect. The structures were probably planned and executed under the supervision of a master builder or carpenter.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Chain of title information for Berks County is vague and often incomplete. Not only are

there no property assessment maps, but the Pennsylvania Germans were notoriously reluctant to record their transfers of property. As a result, a chain of title could not be established for this property.

The first family that could be identified with this property is the Konigs. A date stone on the large house reads "Johann-Sarah Konig 1856." This is further supported by the 1862 atlas, which list "Chris Koenig" on the property. In about 1880 Jacob Speicher acquired the property. The iron bridge across the Tulpenocken Creek just east of the house was known as the Speicher Bridge; it dated from 1878. After the death of Henry Speicher in about 1917, the property passed to his daughter Sallie Berger (Deed Book 657, page 275, October 19, 1926, recorded October 20, 1927). The Berger family retained the property until 1975.

4. Alterations and additions: Coupled with uncertainty of construction dates is an uncertainty about alterations. The large house was probably doubled in size in addition to receiving front and back porches, clapboarding and other improvements in 1856. The barn has a shed addition on the north end and a gabled addition to the northwest, both probably dating from the late nineteenth century.

#### B. Sources of Information

##### 1. Primary and unpublished sources:

###### a. Interviews and correspondence

Mrs. Walter Berger, Allentown, Pa.; recent owner;  
telephone conversation September 29, 1977.  
Tom Jones, Schaefferstown, Pa; restoration consultant;  
telephone conversation September 21, 1977.  
George Meiser IX, Limekiln, Pa.; local historian;  
telephone conversation September, 1977.  
Samuel P. Reber, Bernville, Pa.; former resident;  
letter September 27, 1977  
Mrs. William Reifsnyder, Bernville Pa; former resident  
and sister of Samuel Reber; interviews August, 1976  
and letter September 27, 1977.

William R. Ross, Lebanon, Pa; appraiser hired by Corps of Engineers; letter to Corps March 18, 1975.

Paul Speicher, Bernville, Pa; Speicher family member and longtime local resident, interviews June, July and August, 1976.

- b. Photographs: Mr. And Mrs. William Reifsnyder of Mount Pleasant, Pa. have in their possession a hand-tinted photograph taken of the Konig-Speicher Farm about 1920. The photograph shows the barn, the farmhouse, and part of the log house. The name "H. Speicher" is clearly visible on the barn.

2. Maps:

Davis, F. A., Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County. Reading, Pa.: Reading Publishing House, 1876.

Township Map of Berks County Pennsylvania "from actual Surveys by L. Fagan". Philadelphia, Pa.: H. F. Bridgens, 1862.

3. Secondary Sources:

Arthur, Eric, and Dudley Whitney. The Barn, A Vanishing Landmark in North America. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1972, esp. pp. 84-113.

Dornbusch, Charles H. and John K. Heyl. Pennsylvania German Barns. Allentown, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, Vol. 21, 1958.

Long, Amos, Jr. The Pennsylvania German Family Farm: A Regional Architectural and Folk Cultural Study of an American Agricultural Community. Breinigsville, Pa.: The Pennsylvania German Society, Vol. VI, 1972.

Weiser, George, IX. "Historical Survey of Blue Marsh Project Area." Historical Review of Berks County XXXVI (Summer, 1971), 98-110: general study with good map of the area and the landmarks.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel  
Project Historian, 1976  
Deborah S. Burns  
Historian, 1977  
Alison K. Hoagland  
Historian, 1980  
Historic American Buildings Survey

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a good example of a well-planned ensemble of Pennsylvania German farm buildings. The farmhouse (das bauerhaus) is a traditionally plain and self-effacing dwelling, while the original log house is an unusual height of two-and-a-half stories with a full basement. The farm is also distinguished by an octagonal smokehouse, an outdoor bakeoven (der backoffe), and a large bank barn (die scheier).
2. Condition of fabric: demolished, with the exception of the log house, which was moved.

### B. Description of Exterior of Log House:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-and-a-half-story house measures approximately 20' across its two-bay front by 16' deep. The house is built into a bank, and is three-and-a-half stories tall on the downhill side.
2. Foundations: The foundation is constructed of randomly laid limestone walls with crude corner quoins.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The outside walls are hand-hewn logs with wide bands of chinking between the members. The chinking consists of wood chips stacked diagonally like lath, and then plastered with a mud plaster. The east end wall is covered with German siding, while the west gable is covered with vertical planks.
4. Structural system: The outside walls are constructed of hand-hewn logs set on top of one another to form massive bearing walls. This traditional Pennsylvania German structural system employs corner posts with angled knee braces to stabilize the corners, rather than dovetailed joints. All the logs are pegged in mortise and tenon fashion. There is no ridge pole in the attic; a lapped and pegged joint provides the central roof connection instead.
5. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney running from the cellar through the roof, just inside the west end wall. In the attic the chimney curves severely to puncture the roof at the peak on center.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: A wooden door with eight lights provides the main entry into the house in the east end. Another door provides entry to the cellar in the east end wall.
- b. Windows: The windows in the cellar, first floor, and second floor have six-over-six-light double hung sash. The window in each gable is a six-light, single sash. There are no windows in the west end wall, except the one in the gable.

7. Roof: The roof is a gable roof covered with split wood shingles.

C. Description of Interior of Log House:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The stone cellar is one room. A spring originates outside of the house under a stone arch and flows through the wall into a trough for the cooling of food. There is also a large cooking fireplace.
  - b. First floor: The first floor is one room, with a closet under the stairs and a large cupboard filling the space between the chimney and the south wall.
  - c. Second floor: The second floor is divided into two rooms by a thin board partition.
2. Stairway: There is a winding, schnecke (snail) stairway connecting the first and second floors. There is no interior connection between the first floor and the basement.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The log house faces south and is sited on an embankment leading up from the Tulpehocken Creek. The Tulpehocken Creek runs about 200' north of the log house. The bed of the Union Canal lies just north of the Tulpehocken Creek. The site of the iron truss county bridge once served as a major ford across the creek before the construction of the Union Canal and the bridge. The farm is

approached by a secondary road which serves to connect the farmstead to the main road (State Route 183). The secondary road once ran between the house and the barn, but was altered to go around the barn after the bridge was built in 1878. At present, a narrow gravel driveway leads from the road past the north end of the barn and the front of the log house, terminating in front of the farmhouse.

2. Landscape design: As in the case of nearly all Pennsylvania German farmsteads, there was never a professional attempt to design the farm landscape. The farm, however, exhibits the typical Pennsylvania German sensitivity to the rolling contour of the land, with the buildings sited in convenient and visually satisfying ways that take full advantage of the complexities of the site. The barn, the pig barn, the log house, and the farmhouse, for example, are all sited to allow for multi-story entry and exposure. The placement of the farmhouse, moreover, allows for direct access to the outbuildings, while still ensuring a measure of separateness.

3. Outbuildings

- a. House: The two-and-a-half-story house measures approximately 40' across its four-bay front by 25' deep. The randomly laid limestone foundation becomes a full basement on the north, or downhill, side. The wall construction appears to have been log on the west end and frame on the north, but an adequate inspection was not permitted before demolition. The walls are covered with German siding except for the walls under the porch roofs, which are plastered. Brick chimneys are located just inside each end wall. The south (front) facade has two front doors, flanked by a window on each side. There is a porch with turned balusters across the front facade, and a two-bay porch on the west end of the north facade sheltering the rear door. The first-floor windows have nine-over-six-light double hung sashes and shutters. The second-floor windows have six-over-six-light double hung sashes. The two small windows in each gable have four lights. The gable roof is covered with seamed tin over wood shingles.

It appears that the house was doubled in size, probably in 1856. A datestone for that year is located just below the eaves in the middle of the south facade. This addition would explain the different materials of construction, as well as the stone foundation wall in the middle of the

cellar. Furthermore, the floor joists in the west half of the house were hewn only on two sides; in the east half, the joists were squared.

The present first-floor plan follows traditional farmhouse planning techniques. A large room running the full depth of the house in the west end was the kitchen (die Kich), while the remaining space was divided between the parlor (die Schtubb) and the parents' or grandparents' bedroom (die Kammer). A fireplace on the end wall is enclosed and used as a closet.

A winding, snail (Schnecke) stairway is found in the middle of the first floor at the rear. It opens to both the kitchen and the rear room, indicating that it was once a corner stairway in the earlier, smaller farmhouse. The second floor has been completely replanned with four bedrooms reached from a polygonally shaped hall at the top of the stairway. The stairs to the cellar are directly under the stairway leading to the second floor. The basement is divided into two sections reflecting the two stages of building. There are very large fireplaces at both ends of the cellar, indicating that it was used as a cellar kitchen.

- b. Barn: This typically large Pennsylvania German bank barn, measuring approximately 80' by 30', is oriented to the west. The foundations are randomly laid limestone, and the south wall has professionally cut sandstone quoins that were probably salvaged from the Union Canal locks about 1900. The barn superstructure is constructed of massive, hand-hewn timbers with mortise and tenon joints (a traditional structural system known as fachwerkbau). Knee braces and angle braces perpendicular to the slope of the rafters support the roof. The vertical planks on the exterior are painted white with green trim. The projecting forebay (also known as the vorbau, vorschuss, overhand, overshoot, or overshoot) provides a protected outdoor work space on the first floor and also provides shelter for the six doors leading into the first floor of the barn. The barn has three sets of large barn doors on the west facade, with a smaller, man-sized, door-within-a-door built into each set of larger doors. There is a segmentally arched, nine-over-six-light window in each gable. The roof is clad with tin sheets placed directly

over the rafters (the roofs on the additions are tin applied over wood shingles). Three ventilator cupolas sit on the peak of the roof. The center cupola is larger than the two at each end, but all are of a similar design, employing an arched section of ornamental bracketing and dentils supporting a pyramid roof. A small spire rises from the center of each pyramid roof.

The plan of the two main floors of the barn is typical of the Pennsylvania German bank barn. The lower floor is essentially one continuous room. This room has been carefully subdivided into four sets of stalls or stables, serviced by two feed alleys. The second and fifth doors (counting from the south end wall) are service doors leading to feed alleys, where the feed is transferred from the second floor (through "hay holes") to troughs running along each end of the adjoining stalls. The animals enter their stalls through the first, third, fourth, and sixth doors. This is an interesting survival of the traditional first-floor plan. Most modern dairymen have substituted one or two rows of easily serviced metal stanchions running the full length of the barn for the multiple entry system. The front wall of the first-floor can thus still be entered through any of the six, two-piece, "Dutch" doors. The interior of the first floor has been heavily whitewashed and has a concrete floor in some sections.

On the second floor, the central area, as entered by three sets of large barn doors on the uphill side, was originally used as a threshing floor and had partitions built between the bays to contain grain being processed. The bays to the right and the left were storage mows for straw and hay. The first and second floors are joined by two "hay holes" through which hay and straw were dropped for use on the first floor. There is fully two-and-a-half stories of open storage space above the level of the second floor for piles of hay and straw. A steel track trolley arrangement runs the full length of the inside peak of the roof to provide for movement of hay and straw with a hay hook.

The barn has a one-and-a-half-story shed addition on the north end wall (measuring approximately 20' X 30') which functions as a drive-through corn crib. The barn also has a gable-roofed addition to the northwest which has been built into an embankment, providing three-and-a-half stories on the north side and two-and-a-half stories to the south side.

- c. Outdoor Bake Oven: This traditional structure, lying in ruins about 50' west of the house, is constructed of brick and stone with a frame superstructure. The gable roof is covered with wood shingles, and there is a chimney in the middle.
- d. Smokehouse: This traditional outbuilding, located about 60' west of the farmhouse, was used to smoke meats. The building is octagonally shaped, measuring about 4' on a side. The batten door has strap hinges 2' long and traditional iron clasping hardware. The foundation is constructed of randomly laid limestone masonry. The roof is covered with hand-split wood shingles. The structural system is simple stud framing. The interior is blackened from use, and there is still a faint smell of smoked meat.
- e. Pig Barn: This now-demolished structure, located about 75' southeast of the house, was constructed of heavy, hand-hewn timbers and may have been the original barn, or at least on the site of the original barn. It was built into an embankment, giving it three-and-a-half stories on the north side and two-and-a-half stories on the south side. The cellar was open on the north side, allowing storage of farm equipment. The foundation was constructed of randomly laid limestone masonry. The superstructure was sheathed with vertical boards painted white with green trim. The building was rectangular in shape and measured about 20' by 35'.
- f. Privy: The privy is located immediately to the east of the ruins of the pig barn. The present wood structure has a shed roof covered with asbestos roofing material.
- g. Wagon shed: This now-demolished one-and-a-half-story frame building was entered by way of two large doors supported by long strap hinges. It was located along the driveway northwest of the barn and was used for storage of vehicles and equipment. Shed-roofed additions were built on each flank. The building was painted white with green trim.

- h. Chicken houses, corn crib, silo, and milk house: These typical early twentieth-century farm outbuildings stand in various states of deterioration to the north, east, and west of the barn. The silo (demolished 1976) was concrete block, as is the flat-roofed milk house. The chicken houses and corn crib are simple stud construction with asbestos roofs.

Prepared by Thomas Kheel  
Project Historian  
Historic American Buildings  
Survey  
August, 1976

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Tulpehocken Creek Survey was undertaken in 1976 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in cooperation with the Philadelphia Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of Blue Marsh Lake. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, the documentation was prepared on site by project supervisor Perry Benson (University of Pennsylvania); student architects Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Gregory Lee Miller (University of Illinois), Robert Moje (University of Virginia), Daniel F. Clancy (University of Pennsylvania), and Steven M. Sharpapiro (University of Maryland); and HABS project historian Thomas H. Kheel (Cornell University) and HAER project historian Stuart Campbell (University of Delaware). The drawings were completed in the HABS office in 1977 and 1978 by Mr. Clarke and HABS architects Susan M. Dornbusch and Bethanie C. Grashof. The HABS data was edited in 1977 by Deborah S. Burns and prepared for transmittal in 1980 by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff.